

CHAPTER 1

Prophecy

¶1 [1] {15} Prophecy, or Revelation, is certain knowledge of some matter revealed by God to human beings.

2 A Prophet, moreover, is one who interprets the revealed things of God to those who are unable to have the certain knowledge of the matters revealed by God, and so can only embrace the matters being revealed by mere faith.

3 For among the Hebrews, a Prophet is called נָבִיא *navi*,¹ that is, orator and interpreter. Yet in Scripture *navi* is always usurped for an interpreter of God, as is gathered from Exodus 7:1.

4 There God says to Moses, *Behold, I constitute you the God of Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother will be your Prophet.*

5 He is saying, as it were: Since in interpreting what you will speak, Aaron acts in the person of a Prophet, therefore you will be the God of Pharaoh as it were, or the one who acts in the role of God.

¶2 [2] We will deal with Prophets in the following Chapter; here we will deal^o with Prophecy: from its definition, just handed down,² it follows that natural knowledge can be called Prophecy.

2 For the things we know by the natural light depend solely on knowledge of God and of his eternal decrees.

3 But since this natural knowledge is common to all human beings—for it depends on foundations common to all human beings—therefore it is not so well regarded by the vulgar, who are always panting after what is rare and alien to their nature, and spurning natural gifts; and on that account, when they speak of prophetic knowledge, they want this knowledge^o excluded. [3] Still, by an equal right it can nevertheless be called divine, as can any other knowledge^o, whatever it may be, since God's nature, insofar as we participate in it, and God's decrees dictate it to us, as it were; and it does not differ from the knowledge^o everyone calls divine, except that the latter extends beyond its limits, and the laws of human Nature considered in themselves cannot be its cause. Yet in respect of the certainty that natural knowledge {16} involves and the source from which it is derived (namely, God), it does not yield to prophetic knowledge in any mode.

4 Unless, perhaps, someone wanted to understand, or rather to dream, that the Prophets had a human body but not a human mind, so that their sensations and

¹"Cf. Annotation 1." Spinoza's note.

² Spinoza's Latin term is *tradita*, akin to the English word "tradition." This term recurs frequently in the *Treatise*, and will always be translated as either "handed down" or "handed over."

1.3.1-5.5

consciousness³ were of quite another nature than ours are.

¶3 [4] Yet though natural science is divine, its propagators still cannot be called Prophets.⁴

2 For what they teach, other human beings can perceive and embrace with a certainty and entitlement equal to theirs, and not by faith alone.

¶4 [5] Accordingly, since our mind—solely on the basis of containing in itself God's Nature objectively⁵ and participating in it—has the power to form some notions explaining the nature of things and teaching the conduct⁶ of life, we can deservedly state that the mind's nature, insofar as it is conceived in such a way⁷, is the first cause of divine revelation. For (as we have just indicated)⁷ the idea and nature of God dictates everything we clearly and distinctly understand, not in words but in a far more excellent mode, which best agrees with the nature of the mind—as anyone who has tasted the certainty of understanding has without a doubt experienced within himself.

2 [6] But since my design is chiefly to speak only about things that have to do with Scripture alone, it is enough to have said these few things about the natural Light.

3 Therefore, I proceed to the other causes and means by which God reveals to human beings those things that exceed the limits of natural knowledge—and also that do not exceed them (for nothing impedes God from communicating to human beings in other modes the same things we know by the natural light)—so that I might deal with them at more length.

¶5 [7] Be that as it may, whatever can be said about them has to be sought from Scripture alone.

2 For what can we say about things exceeding the limits of our understanding besides what is handed down to us, by mouth or in writing, from the Prophets themselves?

3 And since nowadays we do not have any Prophets that I know of, nothing is left for us except to roll out⁸ the sacred scrolls left to us by the Prophets.

4 With this caution, however: let us not state anything about such matters, or attribute anything to the Prophets themselves, which they themselves did not clearly dictate.

5 [8] But here it is to be noted, first and foremost, that the Jews never make mention of intermediate or particular causes and do not care about them; but because of religion and piety, or (as the vulgar {17} are used to saying) devotion, they always have recourse to God. For if, for example, they have made money in business, they say it has been bestowed on them by God; if they long for anything to happen, they say God has disposed their heart; and if they are even thinking something, they say

³ Or: conscience.

⁴ Cf. Annotation 2." Spinoza's note.

⁵ I.e., as an object or concept in the mind. Cf. P.5.12; also Spinoza, *Cogitata Metaphysica* 1.2.2, (in *The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*, trans. H. H. Britain [La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1974], 121); *Ethics*, Pt. I, Props. 17 Schol., 30— though cf. Pt. II, Prop. 7 Cor. (trans. White, 58, 66, 83).

⁶ Or: use.

⁷ See 1.2.3.

⁸ Or: unravel.

God has said it to them.

6 Therefore, not everything that Scripture says God has said to someone is to be considered as Prophecy and a knowledge above the natural, but only what Scripture expressly says or what follows from the details of the narrative as having been Prophecy or revelation.

¶6 [9] If we run through the Sacred scrolls, therefore, we will see that everything God revealed to the Prophets was revealed to them either in words or in figures, or in both modes—words and figures.

2 The words, moreover, and the figures as well, were either true and outside the imagination of the Prophet hearing or seeing them, or imaginary—no doubt since the Prophet's imagination, even while he was awake, was so disposed that he seemed to himself clearly to be hearing words or seeing something.

¶7 [10] For by a true voice, God revealed to Moses the Laws he wanted to prescribe to the Hebrews, as is established from Exodus 25:22, where he says **וְנוֹאֲדַתִּי לְךָ שָׁם** *And I will be prepared for you there and will speak with you out of that part of the covering which is between the two cherubs.*

2 This shows that God used a true voice, since Moses discovered God prepared to speak with him there whenever he wanted.

3 And this voice alone—the one by which the law was produced—was a true one, as I will soon show.⁹

¶8 [11] I would suspect that the voice by which God called Samuel was a true one, since in the last verse of I Samuel 3 it is said, **וַיֹּסֶף יְהוָה לְהִרְאֹת בְּשָׁלוֹ כִּי נִגְלָה יְהוָה** *And again God appeared to Samuel in Shiloh, since God had been manifest to Samuel in Shiloh by God's word.*¹⁰ It is saying, as it were, that the appearance of God to Samuel was nothing else but that God manifested himself to him by a word, or was nothing else but that Samuel heard God speaking.

2 Still, since we are compelled to distinguish between the Prophecy of Moses and that of the other Prophets,¹¹ it is necessarily to be said that this voice heard by Samuel was imaginary. This can be gathered as well from the fact that it relayed the voice of Eli, which Samuel was very used to hearing; and so he was able to imagine it more readily as well. For, having been called three times by God, he suspected {18} that he was being called by Eli.¹²

3 [12] The voice Abimelech heard was imaginary.

4 For it is said in Genesis 20:6, *And God said to him in the dreams, etc.*

5 Therefore, he could not imagine God's will while awake, but only in dreams (at the time when the imagination is most capable of imagining things that are not).

¶9 [13] The words of the Decalogue, in the opinion of some Jews,¹³ were not produced by God; but they deem that the Israelites only heard a sound which did not

⁹ See 1.9.1-15.

¹⁰ I Sam. 3:21.

¹¹ Dt. 34:10-12.

¹² I Sam. 3:4-8.

¹³ Cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* II.33.

produce any words and that meanwhile they perceived the Laws of the Decalogue purely with the mind.¹⁴

2 This I once suspected as well, since I saw that the words of the Decalogue in Exodus vary from those of the Decalogue in Deuteronomy.¹⁵ From this it seems to follow (since God only spoke once) that the Decalogue does not mean to teach God's words themselves, but only the tenets.¹⁶

3 [14] Still, unless we want to impugn the force of Scripture, it is to be altogether granted that the Israelites heard a true voice.

4 For Scripture expressly says at Deuteronomy 5:4, **פנים בפנים דבר יהוה עמכם** וְגו' *Face to face did God speak with you, etc.*, that is, as two human beings are used to communicating their concepts to each other, their two bodies mediating.

5 On that account, it seems to agree with Scripture more that God truly created some voice by which he revealed the Decalogue.

6 As for the cause of why the words and reasons of the one version^o vary from the words and reasons of the other, see Chapter 8 about it.¹⁷

7 [15] Be that as it may, not every difficulty is removed in this mode.

8 For it seems in no small way^o alien to reason to state that a created thing, dependent on God in the same mode as other things, could express the essence or existence of God in reality or words, or explain it through his person, namely, by saying in the first person, "I am Jehovah, your God, etc."

9 And although when someone says with his mouth, "I have understood," no one would deem that the mouth has understood, but only the mind of the human being who is saying it—since the mouth is still being referred to the nature of the human being who is saying it, and he to whom it is said had perceived the nature of the understanding as well—the latter^o easily understands the mind of the human being who is speaking, through a comparison with himself.

10 [16] Yet as for those who had recognized nothing of God beforehand besides the name and were longing to speak to him to be made certain of his Existence, I do not see how he satisfied their request through a creature (which is not being referred to God any more than other created things and does not pertain to God's nature) who would say, "I am {19} God."

11 I ask, What if God had contorted Moses' lips—but why Moses'? indeed, any beast's—to pronounce and say the same thing, "I am God": would they understand God's existence from it?

12 [17] Furthermore, Scripture seems to indicate altogether that God himself spoke (to which end he descended from heaven above Mount Sinai),¹⁸ and not only did the Jews hear him speaking, but the Great also saw him (see Ex. 24);¹⁹ and the Law revealed to Moses—to which it was not permitted to add anything or take anything

¹⁴ Lit.: with the pure mind.

¹⁵ Ex. 20:1-14, Dt. 5:6-18.

¹⁶ See Glossary, s.v. "tenet."

¹⁷ See 8.1.94-97.

¹⁸ Ex. 19:20.

¹⁹ Ex. 24:9-10.

1.9.13-12.1

away²⁰ and which was instituted as the jurisdiction of the Fatherland—never enjoined us to believe that God is incorporeal nor even that he has no image or figure, but only that God is, and to believe in him and pray to him alone. It enjoined them not to depart from the worship of him and not to attach any image to him and not to make any.²¹

13 [18] For, inasmuch as they had not seen God's image, they could not make any they had seen which would refer to God, but it would necessarily refer^o to another created thing that they had seen; and so, when they prayed to God through that image, they would not be thinking of God, but of the thing to which that image referred; and thus, ultimately, they would be attributing the honor of God and the worship of him to that thing.

14 Indeed, Scripture²² clearly indicates that God has a figure and that it looked at Moses²³ when he heard God speaking; and yet Moses did not happen to see anything except God's backside.

15 Therefore, I do not doubt that some mystery is hidden here, of which we will speak at more length below.²⁴

16 Here I go on showing the passages of Scripture which indicate the means by which God revealed his decrees to human beings.

¶10 [19] That Revelation happens through images alone is plain from I Chronicles 21, where God shows David his anger through an Angel holding a sword in his hand.²⁵

2 Thus it was for Balaam as well.²⁶

3 And although Maimonides²⁷ and others argue that this history,²⁸ and all those that likewise narrate the appearance of some Angel, happened in dreams—as did those of Manoah,²⁹ of Abraham when he deemed that he would sacrifice his son,³⁰ etc.—and not that in truth someone with his eyes open could see an angel, surely they are babbling. For they have not cared about anything else but twisting Aristotelian trifles and their very own³¹ fantasies out of Scripture: nothing seems more ridiculous to me than this.

¶11 [20] By images in truth not real, but dependent on the Prophet's imagination alone, God revealed to Joseph his future Dominion.³²

¶12 {20} Through images and words, God revealed to Joshua that he would fight

²⁰ Dt. 4:2, 12:32.

²¹ Ex. 20:2-5, Lev. 19:4, Dt. 5:6-9.

²² Ex. 33:20-23.

²³ At Ex. 33:12, Moses quotes God as having said to him, literally, *You have found grace in my [sc., God's] eyes.*

²⁴ See 2.9.17-25, 3.5.35-41.

²⁵ I Chr. 21:16.

²⁶ Num. 22:23, 31.

²⁷ See Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* II.41-42.

²⁸ Or: story. Likewise throughout.

²⁹ Jud. 13:3-23.

³⁰ Gen. 22:11-18.

³¹ Lit.: own proper.

³² Gen. 37:5-10.

for them,³³ no doubt showing him an Angel with a sword as if the Angel were the leader of an army; God also revealed this to him in words, and Joshua heard it from the Angel.

2 To Isaiah as well (as is narrated in ch. 6),³⁴ it was represented through figures that God's providence would desert the populace: namely, by imagining God thrice Holy on the highest throne, and the Israelites defiled with the mud of their sins and immersed in dung heaps, as it were, and thus distant from God in the greatest degree.

3 By these images, he understood the present, most miserable state of the populace; their future calamities, however, were revealed to him in words that were produced as it were by God.³⁵

4 And on this model, I could bring up many examples from Sacred Writ, if I did not deem that they were sufficiently recognized by everyone.

¶13 [21] But all these things are more clearly confirmed by the text of Numbers 12:6-7, which reads as follows: **אם יהיה נביאכם יהוה במראה אליו אתודע בחלום** **אדבר בו לא כן עבדי משה וגו פה אל פה אדבר בו ומראה ולא בחידת ותמונת יהוה** **יביט** *If any of yours will be a Prophet of God, I will be revealed to him in a vision* (that is, through figures and hieroglyphics; for it says of the Prophecy of Moses that it was a vision without hieroglyphics). *I will speak to him in dreams* (that is, not with real words and a true voice). *But not so for Moses: to him I speak mouth to mouth and in a vision, but not in riddles; and he looks at the image of God; that is, looking at me, he speaks with me as a friend and in truth is not terrified, as is said in Exodus 33:11.*

2 Therefore, it is not to be doubted that the other Prophets did not hear a true voice: this is more confirmed in addition by Deuteronomy 34:10, where it is said, **ולא קם נביא עוד בישראל כמשה אשר ידעו יהוה פנים אל פנים** *And there never was established (properly: rose up) a prophet of Israel like Moses, whom God recognized face to face.* This is to be understood as being through the voice alone. For Moses himself had never seen God's face (see Ex. 33).³⁶

¶14 [22] Besides these means, I find no others in Sacred Writ by which God communicates to human beings; and so, as we have shown above,³⁷ no others are to be fantasized or admitted.

2 And although we clearly understand that God can communicate himself immediately to human beings—for he communicates his essence to our minds with no bodily means employed—still, if a human being were to perceive some things with the mind alone {21} which are not contained in the first foundations of our knowledge and cannot be deduced from them, his mind would necessarily have to be more outstanding and far more excellent than a human one.

3 [23] Therefore, I do not believe anyone else has arrived at such a perfection above others besides Christ, to whom God's wishes that lead human beings to salvation were revealed without words or visions, but immediately: thus God manifested himself

³³ Josh. 5:13-15.

³⁴ Is. 6:1-5.

³⁵ Is. 6:11-13.

³⁶ I.e., Ex. 33:12, 20. Cf. 1.9.14-15, 20.11-16, 19.

³⁷ See 1.10.1-3.

1.14.4-17.6

to the Apostles through the mind of Christ, as he once did to Moses with an airy voice mediating.³⁸

4 And therefore the voice of Christ can be called the voice of God, just like the one Moses heard.

5 And in this sense we can say as well that God's Wisdom, that is, the Wisdom that is above human understanding, has taken on human nature in Christ, and Christ has been the way of salvation.

¶15 [24] But here it is necessary to admonish that I am not at all speaking of what some Churches state of Christ; nor do I deny it. For I readily confess that I do not grasp it.

2 What I have just affirmed, I conjecture from Scripture itself.

3 For I have nowhere read that God appeared or spoke to Christ, but that God was revealed to the Apostles through Christ and that he is the way of salvation³⁹ and, finally, that the Old Law was handed down through an Angel and in truth not immediately from God, etc.⁴⁰

4 Therefore, if Moses spoke with God face to face as a man is used to doing with a friend⁴¹ (that is, with their two bodies mediating), Christ on the other hand communicated with God mind to mind.

¶16 [25] Accordingly, we assert that, besides Christ, no one received what was revealed of God except by the work of the imagination—by the work of words or images—and so, as far as prophesying goes, it is not the work of a more perfect mind but of a more vivid imagination, as I will show more clearly in the following Chapter.⁴²

2 Now here it is to be asked what Sacred Writ understands by the Spirit of God infused in the Prophets, or what the Prophets spoke on the basis of God's Spirit. For investigating this, it is to be asked first what the Hebrew word **רוח** *ruach* signifies, which the vulgar interpret as Spirit.

¶17 [26] The word **רוח** *ruach* in its genuine sense signifies wind, as is recognized; but it is very often usurped to signify many other things, which yet are derived from it.

2 For it is taken, first, to signify breath, as in Psalm 135:17 **אף אין יש רוח בפיהם** *Also there is no Spirit in their mouth.*

3 Second, spirit or respiration, as in I Samuel 30:12, {22} **ותשב רוחו אליו** *And the Spirit returned to him*; that is, he breathed again.

4 Hence it is taken, third, for animation and strength, as in Joshua 2:11, **ולא קמה עוד רוח באיש** *And the Spirit was not established afterward in any man.*

5 Likewise in Ezekiel 2:2, **ותבא בי רוח ותעמידני על רגלי** *And there came into me a Spirit (or force) that made me stand up on my feet.*

6 Hence it is taken, fourth, for virtue and capability, as in Job 32:8, **אכן רוח היא באנוש** *Certainly the Spirit itself is in a human being*; that is, science is not exactly to

³⁸ Ex. 19:19.

³⁹ Acts 16:17.

⁴⁰ Ex. 23:20, Acts 7:53, Gal. 3:19, Heb. 2:2.

⁴¹ Ex. 33:11.

⁴² See 2.1.1ff.

be sought among the old, for I now find that it depends on the specific virtue and capacity of the human being.

7 Thus Numbers 27:18, **איש אשר רוח בו** *A man in whom there is Spirit*.

8 [27] It is furthermore taken, fifth, for a tenet of the spirit, as in Numbers 14:24, **עקב היתה רוח אחרת עמו** *Since in him was another Spirit*, that is, another tenet of the spirit, or another mind.

9 Likewise in Proverbs 1:23, **אביעה לכם רוחי** *I will speak my Spirit* (that is, mind) to you.

10 And in this sense it is usurped to signify will, or the decree, appetite and impulse of the spirit—as in Ezekiel 1:12, **אל אשר יהיה שמה הרוח ללכת ילכו** *Where the Spirit (or will) was going, they went*.

11 Likewise in Isaiah 30:1, **ולנסוך מסכה ולא רוחי** *to pour an outpouring, and not on the basis of my Spirit*.

12 And 29:10, **כי נסך עליהם יהיה רוח תרדמה** *since God poured over them a Spirit* (that is, an appetite) for sleeping.

13 And in Judges 8:3, **אז רפתה רוחם מעליו** *then their Spirit—or impulse—was mitigated*.

14 Likewise in Proverbs 16:32, **ומושל ברוחו מלוכד עיר** *one who dominates his Spirit (or appetite), than one who takes a city*.

15 Likewise in 25:28, **איש אין מעצור לרוחו** *a man who does not control his Spirit*.

16 And in Isaiah 33:11, **רוחכם אש תאכלכם** *Your Spirit is a fire that consumes you*.

17 [28] Besides, this word **רוח** *ruach*, insofar as it signifies spirit, serves to express all the passions of the spirit, and the gifts as well: as **רוח גבוהה** *haughty Spirit*,⁴³ for signifying pride; **רוח שפלה** *downcast Spirit*,⁴⁴ for humility; **רוח רעה** *evil Spirit*,⁴⁵ for hatred and melancholy; **רוח טובה** *good Spirit*,⁴⁶ for gentleness; **רוח קנאה** *Spirit of jealousy*,⁴⁷ **רוח זנונים** *Spirit (or appetite) of fornications*,⁴⁸ **רוח חכמה/עצה/גבורה** *Spirit of wisdom⁴⁹/counsel⁵⁰/strength⁵¹*, that is (for in Hebrew we frequently use substantives as adjectives), a wise, prudent, strong spirit, or the virtue of wisdom, of counsel, of strength; **רוח חן** *Spirit of benevolence*,⁵² etc.

18 Sixth, it signifies the mind or {23} spirit itself, as in Ecclesiastes 3:19, **ורוח אחד לכל** *The Spirit (or soul) is the same for all*, **והרוח תשוב אל האלהים** *and the Spirit will return to God*.⁵³

⁴³ Prov. 16:18, Eccl. 7:8.

⁴⁴ Is. 57:15, Prov. 16:19, 29:23.

⁴⁵ Jud. 9:23, I Sam. 16:14-16, 18:10, 19:9.

⁴⁶ Ps. 143:10.

⁴⁷ Num. 5:14, 30.

⁴⁸ Hos. 4:12, 5:4.

⁴⁹ Ex. 28:3, Dt. 34:9, Is. 11:2.

⁵⁰ Is. 11:2.

⁵¹ Is. 11:2.

⁵² Zech. 12:10.

⁵³ Eccl. 21:7.

19 Seventh, finally, it signifies areas of the world (on account of the winds that blow there) and even the sides of any thing which look at those areas of the world.

20 See Ezekiel 37:9 and 42:16-19, etc.

¶18 [29] Now it is to be noted that a thing is being referred to God and is said to be God's: First, since it pertains to God's nature and is as it were a part of God, as when is said **כח יהוה** *power of God*,⁵⁴ **עיני יהוה** *eyes of God*.⁵⁵

2 Second, since it is in God's power and acts at God's nod: thus in the Sacred Books°, the heavens are called **שמי יהוה** *heavens of God*,⁵⁶ since they are God's chariot and home; Assyria is called the whip of God;⁵⁷ and Nebuchadnezzar the servant of God,⁵⁸ etc.

3 Third, since it has been dedicated to God, as **היכל יהוה** *temple of God*,⁵⁹ **נזיר יהוה** *God's Nazarite*,⁶⁰ **לחם יהוה** *bread of God*,⁶¹ etc.

4 Fourth, since it is handed down through the Prophets and is not revealed by the natural light. Therefore, the Law of Moses is called the Law of God.

5 Fifth, to express a thing in the superlative degree, as **הרי אל** *mountains of God*,⁶² that is, the highest mountains; **תרדמת יהוה** *sleep of God*,⁶³ that is, the deepest; and in this sense is Amos 4:11 to be explained, where God himself speaks thus: **הפכתי עמורה ואת סדום ואת גמורה** *I have overturned you, just as the overturning of God (overturned) Sodom and Gomorrah*; that is, just as that memorable overturning; for since God himself is speaking, it cannot be properly explained otherwise.

6 The natural science of Solomon is also called God's science⁶⁴—that is, divine, or above the common.

7 In the Psalms as well, cedars are called **אזרי אל** *cedars of God*,⁶⁵ to express their unusual size.

8 And in I Samuel 11:7, to signify a very great dread, it is said: **ויפל פחד יהוה על העם** *and a dread of God fell upon the populace*.

9 [30] And in this sense, everything that surpassed the grasp of the Jews, and whose natural causes they were ignorant of at that time, they were used to referring to God.

10 Therefore, a tempest was called **גערת יהוה** *a scolding of God*,⁶⁶ and thunder

⁵⁴ Num. 14:17.

⁵⁵ Gen. 6:8.

⁵⁶ Lam. 3:66.

⁵⁷ Is. 10:5.

⁵⁸ Jer. 25:9, 27:6, 43:10.

⁵⁹ I Sam. 1:9, Jer. 7:4, 24:1, Ezek. 8:16, Hag. 2:18, Zech. 6:12, 13, Ezra 3:10, II Chr. 26:16, 27:2.

⁶⁰ Jud. 13:5, 7, 16:17.

⁶¹ Lev. 21:6, 8, 17, 21, 22.

⁶² I Sam. 36:7.

⁶³ I Sam. 26:12.

⁶⁴ I Ki. 3:28. Here Spinoza identifies **חכמה** (lit., "wisdom") with **דעת** ("science"; cf. 4.4.40, 43). Likewise at 1.20.15, 4.4.38, and 5.4.19.

⁶⁵ Ps. 80:11.

⁶⁶ II Sam. 22:16, Ps. 18:17, 76:73.

and lightning God's arrows.⁶⁷ For they deemed that God had the winds enclosed in caverns, which they called God's treasures.⁶⁸ in this opinion, they differed from the Heathens by the fact that they believed that God, not Aeolus,⁶⁹ was their ruler.

11 Because of this as well, miracles are called works of God, that is, stupendous.

12 For surely all natural things {24} are God's works, and are and act through divine power alone.

13 In this sense, therefore, the Psalmist calls the miracles of Egypt God's powers,⁷⁰ since to the Hebrews, who were not expecting anything like them, they opened the way toward salvation in extreme perils; and therefore they admired them in the greatest degree.

¶19 [31] Since, therefore, unusual works of nature are called works of God,⁷¹ and trees of unusual height are trees of God,⁷² it is hardly to be wondered that in Genesis the strongest human beings and those of great stature, although impious rapists and lechers, are called sons of God.⁷³

2 Therefore, the ancients—not only the Jews but also the Heathens—used to refer absolutely everything in which someone excelled the rest, to God. For when Pharaoh heard the interpretation of his dream, he said that the mind of the Gods was in Joseph;⁷⁴ and Nebuchadnezzar said as well to Daniel that he had the mind of the Holy Gods.⁷⁵

3 Indeed, nothing is more frequent among Latin-speakers as well. For what has been skillfully made, they say has been built by a divine hand: if someone wanted to translate this into Hebrew, he would have to say *built by the Hand of God*, as is recognized by Hebraists.

¶20 [32] With these things, accordingly, the Passages in Scripture where mention is made of God's Spirit can be easily understood and explained.

2 Namely, רוח אלהים *Spirit of God* and רוח יהוה *Spirit of Jehovah* signify in some passages nothing more than a very vehement, very dry, and fatal wind, as in Isaiah 40:7, רוח יהוה נשבה בו *a wind of Jehovah blew into it*, that is, a very dry and fatal wind.

3 And in Genesis 1:2, *And a wind of God* (or a very strong wind) *was moving above the water*.

4 [33] Furthermore, it signifies a great spirit. For the spirit of Gideon and of Samson is called in Sacred Writ רוח יהוה *the Spirit of God*,⁷⁶ that is, a very bold spirit, prepared for anything.

⁶⁷ Zech. 9:14.

⁶⁸ Jer. 10:13, Ps. 135:7.

⁶⁹ Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.52-91.

⁷⁰ Ps. 114:3.

⁷¹ Ps. 33:4ff., 78:7ff., 103:22, 104:31, 111:2ff., 145:5ff., etc.

⁷² Ps. 104:6.

⁷³ Gen. 5:1.

⁷⁴ Gen. 41:38.

⁷⁵ Dan. 4:5.

⁷⁶ Jud. 6:34 (Gideon); 13:25, 14:6, 19, 15:14 (Samson).

5 Thus, too, any virtue or force above the common is called **רוח יהוה** *the Spirit* or *virtue of God*, as in Exodus 31:3 **ואמלא אותו רוח אלהים** *And I will fill him* (namely, Bezalel) *with the Spirit of God*, that is (as Scripture itself explains),⁷⁷ with intelligence and art above the common sort of human beings.

6 Thus in Isaiah 11:2, **ונחה עליו רוח יהוה** *And the Spirit of God will rest upon him*, that is, as the Prophet himself declares afterward when explaining it particular by particular in the manner most usual in Sacred Writ, the virtue of wisdom, counsel, strength, etc. Thus, too, Saul's melancholy is called **רוח אלהים רעה** *God's evil Spirit*,⁷⁸ that is, a very deep melancholy. {25} For the servants of Saul, who called his melancholy God's melancholy, were the authors of his calling for someone musical to relax him by playing the harp: this shows that by *God's melancholy* they understood a natural melancholy.

7 [34] By **רוח יהוה** *God's Spirit* is signified, furthermore, the mind itself of a human being, just as in Job 27:3, **ורוח אלה באפי** *And the Spirit of God is in my nose*, alluding to what is said in Genesis,⁷⁹ namely, that God breathes the soul of life in the nose of a human being.

8 Thus Ezekiel, prophesying to the dead, says in 37:14, **ונתתי רוחי בכם וחייתם** *And I will give you my Spirit, and you will live*.

9 And in this sense, it is said in Job 34:14, **אם ישים אליו לבו רוחו ונשמתו אליו** *אם יאסוף* *If he* (namely, God) *wants, he will gather back his Spirit* (that is, the mind that he has given us) *and his soul for himself*.

10 So too is Genesis 6:3 to be understood: **לא ידון רוחי באדם לעולם בשגם הוא** *My Spirit will not reason* (or will not decree) *in a human being ever, since he is flesh*; that is, a human being afterward will act on the basis of the decrees of the flesh, and not of the mind that I have given to him to discern the good.

11 So too Psalm 51:12-13, **לב טהור ברא לי אלהים ורוח נכון חדש בקרבי: אל תשליכני מלפניך ורוח קדשך אל תקח ממני** *Create for me a pure heart, God, and renew in me a decent* (or moderate) *Spirit* (that is, appetite); *do not reject me from your sight, and do not take the mind of your holiness out of me*.

12 Since sins were believed to arise from the flesh alone, whereas the mind did not urge anything^o except the good, therefore he calls for God's help against the appetite of the flesh, and prays only that the mind the Holy God has given him be preserved.

13 [35] Now since on account of the weakness of the vulgar, Scripture is used to depicting God as like a human being, and attributing to God a mind, a spirit and emotions of the spirit, as well as a body and breath, therefore **רוח יהוה** *Spirit of God* in the Sacred Books^o is often usurped for the mind—spirit, emotion, force, or breath of the mouth—of God.

14 Thus Isaiah 40:13 says, **מי תכן את רוח יהוה** *Who has disposed God's Spirit* (or mind)? That is, who besides God himself has determined God's mind to will anything?

15 And 63:10, **והמה מרו ועצבו את רוח קדשו** *And they affected the Spirit of his holiness with bitterness and sadness*. [36] And hence it happens that it is usually

⁷⁷ Ex. 31:3-5.

⁷⁸ | Sam. 16:16.

⁷⁹ Gen. 2:7.

usurped for the Law of Moses, since it explains God's mind, as it were, {26} as Isaiah himself does in the same chapter, verse 11, **אִיהַ הַשֵּׁם בִּקְרָבוֹ אֶת רוּחַ קִדְשׁוֹ** *Where is the one who has put the Spirit of his holiness in his midst*, namely, the Law of Moses, as is clearly gathered from the context of the speech as a whole. And Nehemiah 9:20, **וְרוּחַךְ הַטּוֹבָה נָתַתָּ לְהַשְׁכִּילָם** *And you have given them your good Spirit—or mind—to make them be understanding*. For it speaks of the time of the Law; and Deuteronomy 4:6 alludes to it as well, when Moses says, *since it* (namely, the Law) *is your science*⁸⁰ *and prudence*, etc.

16 Thus too in Psalm 143:10, **רוּחַךְ טוֹבָה תְּנֵהנִי בְּאֶרֶץ מִשׁוֹר** *Your good Spirit will lead me into the flat land*; that is, your mind as⁸¹ revealed to us will lead me into the correct way.

17 [37] The Spirit of God, as we have said,⁸¹ also signifies God's breath, which is also attributed improperly to God in Scripture, just as mind, spirit and body are, as in Psalm 33:6.

18 Furthermore, God's power, force or virtue, as in Job 33:4, **רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה לִּי** *The Spirit of God has made me*, that is, the virtue or power of God, or if you prefer, God's decree. For the Psalmist,⁸² speaking poetically, also says that the heavens have been made at God's bidding and all the army⁸³ of them by the Spirit or breath of his mouth (that is, at his decree, pronounced as it were in one breath).

19 Likewise in Psalm 139:7, **אֵינִי אֵלָּה מִרוּחְךָ וְאֵינִי מִפְּנֵיךְ אֲבָרָה** *Where will I go (that I might be) outside your Spirit, or where will I flee (that I might be) outside your sight*; that is (as is plain from the things by which the Psalmist himself proceeds to amplify this), where can I go that I might be outside your power and presence?

20 [38] Finally, **רוּחַ יְהוָה** *the Spirit of God* is usurped in the Sacred books⁸⁴ to express the emotions of God's spirit, namely, God's gentleness and mercy, as in Micah 2:7, **הֲקִצְרָה רוּחַ יְהוָה** *Is the Spirit of God (that is, God's mercy) narrowed? Are these (cruelties) his works?*

21 Likewise Zechariah 4:6, **לֹא בְחַיִל וְלֹא בִכְחַ כִּי אִם בְּרוּחִי** *Not with an army,⁸⁴ nor by force, but by my Spirit alone*, that is, by my mercy alone.

22 And I deem that verse 12 of chapter 7 of the same Prophet is also to be understood in this sense, namely, **וְלִבָּם שָׁמוֹ שְׁמִיר מִשְׁמוּעַ אֶת הַתּוֹרָה וְאֶת הַדְּבָרִים** *And they made⁸⁵ their heart into⁸⁶ a rock,⁸⁶ lest they obey the Law and the commandments which God sent on the basis of his Spirit* (that is, on the basis of his mercy) *through the first Prophets*.

⁸⁰ Cf. note on 1.18.6.

⁸¹ See 1.17.2.

⁸² Ps. 33:6.

⁸³ The usual English translation of the Hebrew word for "armies," **צְבָאוֹת**, when referring to the heavens, is "hosts." Unless otherwise noted, Spinoza's Latin equivalent will always be translated "armies" when it appears in Spinoza's own text, and "hosts" when it appears in Spinoza's Latin translation of a biblical text.

⁸⁴ Here the Hebrew word Spinoza is translating is **חַיִל** rather than **צְבָא**. See the previous note.

⁸⁵ Lit.: constituted.

⁸⁶ All the [Latin] editions have *cautum* ['cautious'], . . . which does not correspond to the biblical text (*shamir*, 'diamond'). According to the correction proposed by F. Akkerman, there is no doubt a printing error for *cautum* ('a rock'), which effectively corresponds to the text of Isaiah." Akkerman's note *ad loc.*, 708, n. 72.

23 In this sense too, Haggai 2:5 says, **ורוחי עומדת בתוכם אל תיראו** *And my Spirit (or my grace) will remain among you; do not be afraid.*

24[39] That {27} Isaiah 48:16 says, moreover, **ועתה יהיה אלהים שלחני ורוחו** *And now the Lord God and his Spirit have sent me*, can be understood in terms of God's spirit and mercy, or even in terms of his mind as⁸⁷ revealed in the Law. For he says,⁸⁷ *From the beginning* (that is, when I first came to you to preach God's anger and his sentence⁸⁸ produced against you) *I have not spoken hiddenly; from the time it was (produced) I was there* (as he has attested in ch. 7); yet now I am a joyful messenger, and sent by God's mercy to sing of your restoration. It can be understood as well, as I have said, in terms of God's mind as revealed in the Law—that is, that he has just now come to admonish them on the basis of a command of the Law, namely, in Leviticus 19:17.

25 Therefore, he admonishes them under the same conditions and in the same mode as Moses used to.

26 And ultimately he stops preaching their restoration, as did Moses too.

27 Still, the first explanation seems more harmonious to me.

¶21 [40] From all these things, if we may at last return to what we have been aiming at, these phrases of Scripture become transparent: namely, *the Spirit of God was part of the Prophet; God poured his Spirit in human beings; human beings were filled with the Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit*; etc.

2 For they signify nothing else but that the Prophets had a special virtue above the common⁸⁹ and that they cultivated piety with extreme steadfastness of spirit.

3 Furthermore, that they perceived God's mind or tenet. [41] For we have shown⁹⁰ that Spirit in Hebrew signifies mind as well as a tenet of the mind; and because of this, the Law itself is called the Spirit or mind of God, since it explained God's mind. Therefore, by an equal right, the imagination of the Prophets, insofar as God's decrees were revealed through it, could also be called the mind of God, and the Prophets could be said to have had the mind of God.

4 And although the mind of God and his eternal tenets have also been inscribed in our minds, and consequently (if I might speak with Scripture) we too might perceive the mind of God, still, since natural knowledge is common to all human beings, it is not so well regarded by human beings, as we have already said;⁹¹ and chiefly not by the Hebrews, who boasted that they were above everyone—indeed, who were used to despising everyone and, consequently, the science common to everyone.⁹²

5 [42] Finally, the Prophets were said to have God's Spirit, since human beings were ignorant of the causes of Prophetic knowledge, and admired it; and on that account, {28} they were used to referring it to God and calling it God's knowledge, as they did other portents.

⁸⁷ Is. 7:10-13.

⁸⁸ See Glossary, s.v. "tenet."

⁸⁹ "Cf. Annotation 3." Spinoza's note.

⁹⁰ See 1.17.8-9, 18.

⁹¹ See 1.2.3.

⁹² Cf. 3.1.45, 3.35-36.

¶22 [43] We can now affirm without misgiving, therefore, that the Prophets perceived the things revealed of God only by the work of the imagination, that is, by the mediating words or images; and these were either true or imaginary.

2 For, since we do not find any other means in Scripture besides these, we are not permitted to fantasize any others either, as we have already said.⁹³

3 [44] By what laws of nature it was done, however, I confess I am ignorant.

4 I might well have said, as others have, that it was done through God's power. Still, I would be seen as babbling.

5 For it would be the same as if I wanted to explain the form of some specific thing by some transcendental term.

6 For everything is done through God's power. Indeed, since Nature's power is nothing but God's power itself, it is certain that we do not understand God's power to the extent that we are ignorant of natural causes. And so it is stupid to have recourse to that same power of God when we are ignorant of the natural cause of some thing, that is, of God's power itself.

7 But there is no need for us now to know the cause of Prophetic knowledge. For as I have already admonished,⁹⁴ we are only endeavoring here to investigate Scripture's lessons so that we might conclude ours on the basis of them, as on the basis of the data of nature.⁹⁵ About the causes of⁹⁶ the lessons, however, we care nothing.

¶23 [45] Accordingly, since the Prophets perceived the things revealed of God by the work of the imagination, there is no doubt that they could have perceived many things beyond the limits of the understanding. For far more ideas can be composed on the basis of words and images than solely on the basis of those principles and notions on which the whole of our natural knowledge is constructed.

¶24 [46] It is obvious, furthermore, why the Prophets perceived and taught almost everything parabolically and enigmatically, and expressed everything spiritual corporeally. For all these things agree more with the nature of the imagination.

2 Now we will not wonder why Scripture or the Prophets speak so improperly and obscurely of God's Spirit or mind, as in Numbers 11:17 and I Kings 22:2, etc.

3 Furthermore, that Micaiah saw God sitting,⁹⁷ Daniel as an old man wearing white clothing,⁹⁸ Ezekiel just like fire,⁹⁹ and those who were there with Christ saw the Holy Spirit as a dove descending,¹⁰⁰ the Apostles as fiery tongues,¹⁰¹ and, finally, Paul when he was first converted {29} saw a great light.¹⁰²

4 For all these things plainly agree with the vulgar imaginations concerning God

⁹³ See 1.14.1.

⁹⁴ See 1.5.1-6.

⁹⁵ Cf. 7.1.9-10.

⁹⁶ I.e., reasons for.

⁹⁷ I Ki. 22:19.

⁹⁸ Dan. 7:9.

⁹⁹ Ezek. 8:2.

¹⁰⁰ Mt. 3:13, Mk. 1:10, Lk. 3:22.

¹⁰¹ Acts 2:3.

¹⁰² Acts 9:3.

1.24.5-8

and Spirits.

5 [47] Finally, since the imagination is vague and unsteadfast, Prophecy did not inhere in Prophets for long and was not frequent either, but was very rare—in a very small number of human beings and in them very rarely as well.

6[48] Since this is so, we are now compelled to inquire where the certainty of the things that the Prophets perceived only through the imagination, and not on the basis of the certain principles of the mind, could have arisen for them.

7 But whatever can be said about this also has to be sought from Scripture, since (as we have already said)¹⁰³ we do not have a true science of this matter, or cannot explain it through its first causes.

8 What Scripture teaches about the certainty of the Prophets, however, I will show in the following Chapter, where I have set out to deal with Prophets.

¹⁰³ Cf. 1.5.1-6, 22.3-7.